

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7977

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USNATO 734

USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, US, CZ

SUBJECT: VE CELEBRATIONS

REF: (A) PRAGUE 716; (B) PRAGUE 917; (C) STATE 88096 (NOTAL)

1. AT EMBASSY'S REQUEST, ZANTOVSKY (HEAD SIXTH DEPT) RECEIVED
CHARGE APRIL 24 FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF VE DAY COMMEMORATION.

2. USING VEILED LANGUAGE, ZANTOVSKY MADE IT CLEAR THAT OVER-
ALL THRUST OF 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
WAS NOT SAME AS THOSE EVENTS COMMEMORATING US ROLE IN LIBERA-
TION OF BOHEMIA. IT WAS IMPORTANT THESE NOT CONFLICT, BUT
WITHIN THOSE BOUNDS, GOC WISHED TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMEMORATION
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OF US ROLE BECAUSE THIS WOULD HONOR BOTH PAST COOPERATION

AND POINT TO FUTURE COOPERATION. HE REFERRED TO PRESS ARTICLES ABOUT US BOMBINGS ETC. (REFTEL B) AND SAID HE WISHED TO SET THOSE ASIDE AND CONCENTRATE ON SPECIFIC QUESTION OF US-CZECHOSLOVAK HONORING OF COOPERATION IN WORLD WAR II. (SEE FUTHER BELOW RE PRESS.)

3. SPECIFICALLY, GOC WAS PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN WREATH-LAYING CEREMONIES BY AMBASSADOR AT CHEB AND BY DCM AT LNARE. REPS WOULD COME FROM MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, ANTI-FASCIST FIGHTERS LEAGUE, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AND LUNCH WAS BEING PLANNED FOR AMBASSADOR AND PARTY IN VICINITY OF CHEB. CZECHS WISHED INFO. ABOUT OUR WREATHS, SO THAT THEY COULD HAVE SIMILAR WREATHS MADE FOR THEIR REPS, TO LAY. THEY WOULD ALSO DO SOME REFURBISHING AROUND THOSE MONUMENTS. (IN RESPONSE QUESTIONS, ZANTOVSKY SAID AT MOMENT GOC WAS NOT CONTEMPLATING ANY OTHER CEREMONIES, E.G. AT PILSEN OR CESKE BUDEJOVICE, AND WAS NOT INTERESTED IN UNITS OF FIRST DIVISION PARTICIPATING. AS FOR RESTORATION OF TAKEN-DOWN PLAQUES AT SEVERAL LOCALES, ZANTOVSKY SAID HE WAS LOOKING INTO THIS.) ZANTOVSKY ADDED THAT HE NOW WISHED RECOMMEND MAY 8 RATHER THAN MAY 7 FOR WREATH-LAYING, SINCE IT WOULD FIT GOC PLANS FOR THE WEEK BETTER. CHARGE SAID HE SAW NO DIFFICULTY IN THIS. (ACTUALLY IT WOULD SEEM FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW VE DAY, MAY 8, MIGHT BE BETTER THAN MAY 7.)

4. VETERANS (REFTEL C). ZANTOVSKY SAID GOC INTERESTED IN HAVING UP TO TEN VETERANS HERE WHO HAD PARTICIPATED PERSONALLY IN LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. GOC WAS PREPARED "ORGANIZE" THEIR STAY HERE, INCLUDING ARRANGING ACCOMMODATIONS, FURNISHING TRANSPORT INTERNALLY, ETC. SINCE THIS WAS US PROPOSAL, THEY WERE NOT ABLE OFFER PICK UP WHOLE TAB. CHARGE GAVE INFO IN REFTEL RE VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS IN PARIS, BUT ZANTOVSKY'S POSITION WAS THAT GOC WOULD BE GLAD HAVE TEN VETS, BUT IT WAS UP TO US TO FURNISH THEM. CHARGE EXPLAINED THAT IT MIGHT BE HARD FIND VETERANS IN EUROPE WHO HAD ACTUALLY SERVED IN BOHEMIA, AND PAYING WAY FROM US FOR OTHERS WOULD BE PROBLEM. HOWEVER HE WOULD REPORT GOC POSITION TO DEPARTMENT. (COMMENT: UNFORTUNATELY, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT GOC WOULD BE WILLING TO PUT UP MUCH MONEY FOR THIS, AND THEIR ONLY INTEREST IS IN VETERANS WHO ACTUALLY SERVED HERE. THEREFORE FROM WHERE WE SIT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROSPECTS WOULD APPEAR DIM OF GETTING ANYBODY HERE. BEFORE TAKING ANY STEPS TO CONTACT LEGION OR VFW IN PARIS, THEREFORE, WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS.)

5. PRESS. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPENING PROVIDED BY ZANTOVSKY, CHARGE STATED IN RATHER STRONG TERMS OUR OBJECTION TO PRESS CAMPAIGN (TYPIFIED BY RUDE PRAVO ARTICLES BY BRICHTA APRIL 12 AND NOVAK APRIL 22) VILLIFYING US ROLE IN LIBERATION OF

CZECHOSLOVAKIA. CHARGE SAID PRESS LINE RE US ROLE WAS SIMPLY UNTRUE, ANGERED ANY AMERICAN WHO READ IT, AND RAISED QUESTION OF WHETHER BILATERAL COOPERATION IN CELEBRATION OF 1945 WAS REALLY POSSIBLE. ZANTOVSKY WROTE DOWN NAMES AND DATES OF ARTICLES, SAID HE FELT THIS BELONGED IN THE IDEOLOGICAL SPHERE, BUT PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER TO SEE IF ANYTHING COULD BE DONE. HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT HE DID FEEL THAT GOC WAS PREPARED TO COOPERATE IN CELEBRATION OF 1945, AND SUCH COOPERATION WAS FEASIBLE.

6. THIS BROUGHT UP QUESTION OF RECEPTION. ZANTOVSKY SAID HE HAD LOOKED INTO THIS AND GOC WAS PREPARED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO A RECEPTION AT SUITABLE LEVEL, PROBABLY AT DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL WITH EQUIVALENTS FROM OTHER MINISTRIES INCLUDING MOD. HE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT HOWEVER THAT WE "COOPERATE" ON THIS RECEPTION, ADVISING EACH OTHER WHO WOULD ATTEND, SO AS TO AVOID ANY EMBARRASSMENT ON EITHER SIDE. HE THEN SUGGESTED BECAUSE OF CROWDED SCHEDULE AROUND MAY 9 HOLDING RECEPTION AFTER MAY 9. CHARGE SAID WE WELCOMED GOC ATTITUDE OF COOPERATING IN THIS AREA; WHILE WE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR AMBASSADOR ON SPECIFICS, HE DID THINK WE COULD PROMISE A HIGH DEGREE OF COOPERATION IF RECEPTION WAS ACTUALLY SCHEDULED. CHARGE SAID FRANKLY, AFTER RECENT PRESS CAMPAIGN, WE HAD OUR DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER TO GO AHEAD. IN ANY EVENT, PRACTICAL PROBLEM WAS DATE, BECAUSE AMBASSADOR WAS COMMITTED TO RETURN TO GENEVA RIGHT AFTER MAY 9 CELEBRATION, SO THE FOLLOWING WEEK WOULD PROBABLY NOT WORK. ZANTOVSKY PROMISED TO LOOK AGAIN INTO QUESTION OF DATES AND LET US KNOW IF ANY DATE DURING WEEK OF MAY 5-9 LOOKED FEASIBLE.

7. COMMENT: IN DISCUSSION ABOUT PRESS, ZANTOVSKY POINTED OUT THAT GOC PARTICIPATION IN WREATH-LAYING (AND PROBABLY IN RECEPTION) WAS A FIRST, AND THUS A STEP FORWARD. THIS IS TRUE, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS NOT TO BE DISMISSED LIGHTLY. CZECHS NOW HAVE EASY OUT FROM RECEPTION BECAUSE OF DATE PROBLEM, AND WE CAN STILL DROP THE IDEA (ZANTOVSKY SAID SPECIFICALLY THERE WOULD BE NO HARM DONE IF WE DID) IF WE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE LOOK OF THINGS. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT WE SHOULD DEFINITELY GO AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR WREATH-LAYING, NOW ON MAY 8, AND WILL DO SO UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED. (NOTE THAT SOVIET PARTICIPATION WAS NOT MENTIONED TODAY, ALTHOUGH IT COULD BE RAISED AGAIN AT LATER TIME.)

8. FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER: DECISION ABOUT RECEPTION IS FINALLY YOURS. OUR RECOMMENDATION IS THAT, DESPITE PRESS CAMPAIGN, WE SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR RECEPTION IN VIEW OF GOC WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE AT FAIRLY HIGH LEVEL. IF GOC COMES UP WITH AN ACCEPTABLE DATE IN WEEK OF MAY 5-9, WE WOULD RECOMMEND GOING AHEAD. IF THEY INSIST ON PUSHING FOR DATE AFTER MAY 9, WE WOULD

BE INCLINED MERGE THIS RECEPTION WITH PLANNED ARMED FORCES
DAY RECEPTION MAY 23, AND FORGET ABOUT SPECIFIC VE DAY AFFAIR.
(IF WE DO GO AHEAD, WITH YOUR APPROVAL WE WOULD PLAN CONSULT
GENERALLY WITH ZANTOVSKY ABOUT PLANS AND GUESTS, AS HE SUG-
GESTED, ALTHOUGH NOT SUBMITTING ANYTHING FOR GOC "APPROVAL.")
PERRY

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